

Ages. There is nothing particularly shocking, therefore, in the fact of the peasants burning castles instead of villages. But this is not regular warfare, remonstrate the legal men. It is certainly very irregular, from the standpoint of the higher classes, to find a whole empire all at once ablaze with intestine war. Hitherto feud and foray were the privilege of prince, lord, and *Ehrbarkeit*. And lo, here is the common man taking a leaf out of their book with a vengeance. Regular or irregular, it is merely a question of the use of force as the only remedy, of which the Middle Ages had furnished illustrations enough.

And the peasant had certainly given warning of what he intended to do if his terms were not accepted. The world had, in fact, long resounded with informal warnings. And yet these feudal lords of the manor are mightily amazed and mightily indignant. To judge from the tone of some of the chroniclers, it would seem as if the notion of mediaeval warfare, as thus illustrated, was something unheard of in the world before. Mercenary armies in the service of some feudal potentate, the armed retainers of some robber baron, might burn villages far and near under the guise of legitimate tactics ; for the villagers to profit by such examples to burn castles was a monstrous crime. The chroniclers forgot, too, in their indignant cant, that the peasant in so doing was often merely anticipating attack, for it was certain that these rustic armies would sooner or later have to reckon with the organised opposition of their oppressors. Had not, further, the Regent Ferdinand and the Suabian League been guilty of dishonourable double-dealing with the Suabian insurgents in order to gain time, and thereby contributed their full share of responsibility for this wild outburst of popular passion that followed these sham parleys at the outset? Had not Ferdinand directed Truchsess to amicably treat with the peasants till he had collected his forces together ? The Suabian League adopted the same policy of false procrastination. Hence the blazing castles, whose destruction would, of course, at the same time furnish more gear and far more wine than the peasant could carry. But the sack of monasteries and churches ? It is this that horrifies the chroniclers who, in this age of religious fury, happen to be devout Roman Catholics,